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NEWS RELEASE
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Public Health Kicks-off Crypto Education Campaign

New statewide rules also go into effect to help prevent another outbreak

(Salt Lake County) – With the busy Memorial Day Weekend approaching, Utah public health officials today launched a statewide cryptosporidium education campaign aimed at keeping swimmers safe this summer. The campaign is designed to educate Utahns about preventing the spread of cryptosporidium, an illness caused by a parasite that causes long-lasting, often debilitating diarrhea. The campaign represents efforts by state and local health departments to prevent another pool-related outbreak of illness this summer.

During the event, the Salt Lake Valley Health Department (SLVHD) unveiled a key component of the education campaign, two public awareness commercials which inform Utahns about what they must do in order to keep crypto out of the state's public pools. The "Keep it clean – No Crypto" television commercials highlight three crucial "safe swimming behaviors" the public must practice when swimming this summer:

1. Do not swim if you currently have, or have had diarrhea in the last two weeks,
2. Take a cleansing shower with soap before entering the pool, and
3. Do not change diapers by the side of the pool.

"The commercials are a key part of our campaign to educate the public," says Gary Edwards, SLVHD Executive Director. "But Utahns have a vital role to play in preventing another waterborne cryptosporidium outbreak this summer – it only takes one careless person to infect an entire pool."

In addition to the public education campaign, public health officials have implemented new regulations to help keep crypto out of pools. The new regulations include: requiring children under three years of age or individuals without bowel control wear a swim diaper and waterproof swim pants, requiring swimmers not to swim if they have diarrhea or have had diarrhea in the last two weeks, and providing methods for pool operators to properly respond to fecal accidents in the swimming pools. The regulation also establishes Cryptosporidium Watch and Warning notices and tools that can help officials control an outbreak should one occur.

"These new regulations are just one of the tools we plan on using to help prevent another outbreak of illness this summer," said Dr. David Sundwall, Utah Department of Health executive director. "However, the most important tool is cooperation and compliance from swimmers. Nearly 2,000 Utahns got sick with crypto last year; the public must be a willing partner if we plan on avoiding another outbreak. If adults, as well as children, have had or are experiencing diarrhea they simply should not be using public swimming facilities."

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Many pools throughout the state, including those run by Salt Lake County, have adopted newer technologies that are proven to be more effective in killing the hardy parasite. While the implementation of UV and Ozone filters are a step in the right direction, they cannot replace the importance of proper hygienic and healthy swimming practices.

“Even with the newest technologies, cryptosporidium can still exist in a pool for many hours until it is cycled through the water filtration system,” said Kristin Riker, Assistant Section Manager with Salt Lake County Parks & Recreation. “The most effective tool in preventing a crypto outbreak and ensuring our pools are safe and clean is for the public to take responsibility for their hygiene before, during and after swimming.”

Last summer, Utah experienced the largest reported recreational water associated outbreak of cryptosporidiosis in the United States. Infection with cryptosporidiosis causes watery diarrhea, stomach cramps and pain, nausea, vomiting, fever and as a result of diarrhea, dehydration and weight loss. Symptoms usually last one to two weeks, and may go in cycles where a person will feel better for a few days, and then feels worse again.

Other important healthy swim behaviors that will help prevent crypto and waterborne illnesses include:

- *Do not swim if you have diarrhea.*
- *Wait two weeks after diarrhea has stopped before swimming.*
- *Take a shower with soap and water before swimming (referred to as a “cleansing shower”).*
- *Do not swallow pool water or get pool water into your mouth.*
- *Wash your hands with soap and water after using the bathroom or changing a diaper.*
- *Take regular bathroom breaks while swimming.*
- *Change diapers often. Change diapers in the bathroom, not at the poolside.*
- *Wash your child’s bottom with soap and water after changing a diaper and then wash your hands with soap and water.*

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